



FIRST THINGS FIRST

Ready for School. Set for Life.

AGENDA ITEM: Regional Needs and Assets Reports

BACKGROUND:

Presented for the Board's consideration are two (2) Regional Needs and Assets Reports submitted in fulfillment of Regional Partnership Council responsibilities under ARS Title 8, Chapter 13, Section 1161.

RECOMMENDATION:

First Things First staff recommends approval of these two (2) Regional Needs and Assets Reports on behalf of their respective Regional Councils:

- Gila River Indian Community
- Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community

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FIRST THINGS FIRST

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October 12, 2010

Message from the Chair:

The 2010 Gila River Indian Community Regional Needs and Assets Report is the second in a series of assessments conducted every two years for the First Things First Gila River Indian Community Regional Partnership Council. The assessment provides a snapshot of the current status of children and families in the region. It is a collection of useful data and community information that will be used to help determine how best to invest resources to improve the lives of young children and families in the region.

The Gila River Indian Community Regional Partnership Council takes great pride in the progress made over the past two years. Together with our community partners, we are delivering on our promise to build a solid foundation for young children and their families. During the past year, we have touched the lives of young children and their families by providing support through grant awards and activities addressing teen parenting, early education/child care, native language and literacy and infant mental health.

The Gila River Indian Community Regional Partnership Council is grateful for the support and guidance received from the Gila River Indian Community Tribal Council. With the ongoing support of tribal leadership, The First Things First Gila River Indian Community Regional Partnership Council will continue to advocate and provide opportunities for healthy growth in the first years of life, parent education on child development, food assistance, and ongoing professional development opportunities for child care providers, teachers, and family caregivers.

Thanks to the dedicated staff, volunteers, and partners, First Things First is making a real difference in the lives of our youngest citizens, not only on the Gila River Indian Community, but throughout the entire State.

Sincerely,

Priscilla D. Foote, Chair

Gila River Indian Community Regional Partnership Council

Gila River Indian Community Regional Partnership Council
Regional Needs and Assets Report
Executive Summary

The Gila River Indian Community is located on 372,000 acres of land in south-central Arizona just south of the cities of Phoenix, Tempe and Chandler. Tribal membership includes the Akimel O'otham (Pima) and Pee Posh (Maricopa) Tribes. The Community is divided into seven districts with the central government seat in Sacaton, Arizona. Each district has its own jurisdiction and maintains one to four seats on the Tribal Council. Language and culture preservation is a priority within the Community, with many tribal programs integrating language and culture into their program planning and curriculum.

Between 2000 and 2009, the number of children aged 0 to 5 years in the Region increased by 79 percent, from 1,429 to 2,556. A majority of the young children (64%) live in households whose annual income is lower than the federal poverty threshold. A large percentage of young children in the Region (40%) were not living with either parent, but with another relative, such as a grandparent.

The number of young children living in single-mother households, and with non-relatives, may be at least partially the result of elevated teen pregnancy rates in some areas of the Region. Births to teen mothers in the Gila River Indian Community Region represented over a quarter of the total births in the Region, which was about twice the rate seen in the state as a whole in 2008 (12%) and six percent higher than the rate for all American Indian tribes across Arizona. Although births to teen mothers may be more common in the Region, so is obtaining timely prenatal care. Pregnant women in the Gila River Indian Community were more likely to begin prenatal care in the first trimester compared to American Indians across the state. The growing population of young children in the Region, and the make-up of the households in which they commonly live, suggests a need for additional and expanded services to pregnant and parenting teens and to the relative caretakers of the young children in the Region.

Educational attainment is lower in the Region than in the state as a whole. Roughly two-thirds of adults 25 years of age or older in the Region have at least a high school diploma or equivalent, with approximately one third having some college or a college degree. However, the high school drop-out rate is high: 34 percent of youth age 15-17 were not enrolled in school, according to the 2000 census.

There are a number of early care and education programs within the Gila River Indian Community including child care centers, home-based childcare, school-based preschools, Family and Child Education (FACE) programs and Head Start. In spite of these considerable assets, it appears that cost and availability of early childhood educational settings may still be an issue, based both on poverty rates in the Community and waiting lists for parents seeking childcare slots.

In addition, a survey of school administrators in the Region showed that while a variety of services seen as valuable to young children and their families exist in the Community, coordination of services and resources among these agencies is viewed as needing strengthening. These results suggest that improving the degree of collaboration and communication among agencies could better serve children aged 0 to 5 and their families.

There is a commitment in the Gila River Indian Community Region to supporting families in crisis. The Thwajik Ke (Healing House) Residential Treatment Center provides inpatient drug and alcohol treatment to community members, and children are allowed to accompany their parents to the inpatient facility. In addition, a domestic-violence shelter is currently in the planning stages with a goal to be built this year.

Providing a diverse array of services across federal, state, tribal and local agencies presents challenges in communication and coordination. The Gila River Indian Community is, however, attempting to meet these challenges by leveraging a federally-recognized model of coordination and communication for services for school-aged children, and those transitioning to school. These and other efforts show that the Gila River Indian Community is striving to support the health, welfare and development of the families and young children who live within the Community.



FIRST THINGS FIRST

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October 22, 2010

Message from the Chair,

The past two years have been rewarding for the First Things First Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community Regional Partnership Council, as we delivered on our mission to build better futures for young children and their families. During the past year, we have touched many lives of young children and their families.

The First Things First Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community Regional Partnership Council will continue to advocate and provide opportunities as indicated throughout this report.

Our strategic direction has been guided by the Needs and Assets reports, specifically created for the Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community in 2008 and the new 2010 report. The Needs and Assets reports are vital to our continued work in building a true integrated early childhood system for our young children and our overall future. The Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community Regional Council would like to thank our Needs and Assets vendors MGT of America, Inc., Children's Action Alliance, and EndVision Research and Evaluation for their knowledge, expertise, and analysis of the Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community. The new report will help guide our decisions as we move forward for young children and their families within the Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community.

Going forward, the First Things First Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community Regional Partnership Council is committed to meeting the needs of young children by providing essential services and advocating for social change.

Thanks to our dedicated staff, volunteers and community partners, First Things First is making a real difference in the lives of our youngest citizens and throughout the entire State.

Thank you for your continued support.

Sincerely,

Toni Harvier, Chair

Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community Regional Partnership Council

Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community Regional Partnership Council

Regional Needs and Assets Report

Executive Summary

In January 2010, MGT of America, Inc. (MGT), was awarded a contract by the Arizona Early Childhood Development and Health Board, also known as First Things First (FTF), to provide a Regional Needs and Assets Report for the Salt River Pima–Maricopa Indian Community (SRP-MIC). MGT teamed with Children’s Action Alliance and EndVision Research and Evaluation for this important engagement. The report synthesizes relevant community data to help inform the FTF Regional Council in decision-making.

Methodology

The methodology used to prepare the Regional Needs and Assets Report is described in this section.

The focus of the report is the collection and meaningful analysis of informative data indicators. The Needs and Assets Report includes an increased emphasis on the Council’s existing “assets,” that is, the institutions or organizations within the community that can be strengthened, expanded, and/or partnered with to support early childhood activities.

Primary Data Collection

Local regional data have been of the utmost importance to the success of this project. The team collected qualitative primary data to reflect the personal views of regional participants and the unique features of the region.

The team used two methods of primary data collection as described below:

1. Web-based stakeholder surveys.
2. Community meeting input.

Web-based Stakeholder Surveys

The team worked closely with FTF staff and the Regional Coordinators and Managers to collect contact information from currently compiled lists of early care and development stakeholders in the community. The team supplemented these stakeholders with information obtained from key organizations, such as medical centers, school principals, food banks, libraries, and WIC centers.

FTF provided MGT with 2,360 e-mail addresses for early care and development stakeholders in Maricopa County. E-mails were sent to each contact seeking participation in the survey portion of this study. Respondents were asked to indicate the communities which they served, and many indicated that they serve communities across multiple regions.

The survey was initiated in April 2010 following revisions based on input from Regional Council Members. The surveys focused on qualitative data from stakeholders about early childhood needs and assets in their local community. Survey respondents were asked to provide information and/or data sources that would contribute further to the reports. Thirty-six respondents provided survey input

about the SRP-MIC. Results of the survey are located in Appendix A of this report.

Community Meeting

On May 6, 2010, FTF held a meeting in conjunction with the scheduled parent meeting at the SRP-MIC's Early Childhood Education Center. FTF representatives provided assistance and information about First Things First and provided parents with specific question topics. Parents were invited to share or write their thoughts, opinions, and questions regarding topics related to early childhood needs and assets in the community. There were twenty-six participants who provided feedback.

A summary of the responses is located in Appendix B of this report.

Secondary Data Collection and Analysis

The team worked with FTF and other Arizona and national data sources for indicators in the Regional Needs and Assets Report template provided in the FTF solicitation. The team worked closely with Regional Coordinators and Managers to identify local sources of documented information. Examples of national and community sources included in this report are as follows:

- Arizona Department of Economic Security.
- Arizona Department of Health Services.
- Arizona Department of Education.
- United States Census Bureau.
- SRP-MIC Head Start.
- Arizona Community Colleges.
- Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community.

Report Overview

The Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community (SRP-MIC) is a small community with cultural strengths as well as many challenges.

The community has faced many economic challenges. In March 2010, the unemployment rate in the SRP-MIC was nearly twice the rate in Maricopa County – 16.7 percent compared to 8.7 percent. In June 2010, there were 2,360 people employed in the community. However, from January through June 2009, only 50 adults claimed unemployment insurance benefits – a number which seems very low compared to the unemployment rate. There were 104 children (age five and younger) in the community receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) cash assistance in January 2010 – a 20 percent increase over 2007, slightly higher than the increase statewide. There was an average of 1.6 children per family receiving TANF in the community, greater than the 1.3 average statewide.

Babies born in the SRP-MIC are more likely to start out with risks compared to babies born in Maricopa County and other Native American communities in Arizona. Mothers are more likely to give birth in their teens, frequently have less than twelve years of education, are less likely to be married, and are less likely to receive adequate prenatal care. To illustrate, in 2008, 8 percent of births in the community were to mothers 17 and younger – a significant improvement over the 2005 rate, but twice the rate in Maricopa County. Another 11 percent of births were to mothers of age 18 or 19. Half of the babies born in the community during 2008 had mothers with less than twelve years of education. This rate is very high compared to Maricopa County and other Native American communities in Arizona.

Between 2005 and 2008, there was a shift in the type of health insurance that paid for births in the community – the percentage paid for by Indian Health Services and private insurance grew, while the percentage paid by Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System (AHCCCS) dropped. This drop may have occurred because the SRP-MIC per capita payments to families moved them above the income level to qualify for AHCCCS. However, in 2008, the percentage of births paid for by AHCCCS was 70 percent -- still quite high compared to Maricopa County and other Native American communities.

Eight out of 10 children who are assessed do not meet the literacy standard when they start kindergarten. About four out of 10 third graders attending school in the community did not meet the standard on the AIMS test in reading or math. Alternately, more than nine out of 10 children met or exceeded the writing standard.

The need for access to high quality, affordable childcare is strong. In 2010, there were seven group homes that were operated by SRP-MIC and certified by the state's Department of Health Services – the same number as in 2008. The Early Childhood Education Center serves about 250 children, including 100 children in Head Start preschool. Waiting lists for the Center are very long. A lack of childcare in the SRP-MIC is cited as a major barrier to employment for parents.

One area of great strength is child vaccination rates, which are substantially higher in the SRP-MIC than in Maricopa County or Arizona. This indicates the community's strength in the area of early childhood health. However, the state's Department of Health Services has identified the community as a Medically Underserved Area because the community has deficiencies in primary care resources and access.

Different sections of the online survey were completed by 12 to 35 respondents. Of those respondents, many said that childcare services are not meeting the needs of the community. They identified cost as the major barrier in childcare, and indicated that there is a lack of high quality childcare that provides services during alternative hours of operation. The top two answers for what should be the number one priority for future FTF funding were increasing the quality of early childhood development and health programs, and improving access to early childhood development and health programs. Alternately, most respondents said that child and family literacy services are meeting the needs of the community.

Eight survey respondents said that support for grandparents raising grandchildren and support and education for teen parents are missing in the community. Also, participants said that there are not enough services for children with special needs.

Community members value many assets in the community for young children and their families, including the Early Childhood Education Center (ECEC), culture and literacy programs, Family and Child Education (FACE), Even Start, Child Find, the Youth Services Early Enrichment program, the Children's Foundation, Head Start, Boys and Girls Club, and fitness and recreation programs. Community members noted the great benefits that FTF leadership has brought to the community, including collaboration and communication among existing services.

Community members also noted the need for expanding many services, including early childhood education, onsite health services, parent education and family support, and speech and occupational therapy.